

# socialist standard

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## *A World Without*



*also: People's Parliament  
Brexit & The Border  
Agriculture  
State Capitalism*





# socialist standard

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## Editorial

### A borderless, stateless world

WE HAVE been hearing a lot about borders lately. As part of the negotiations to leave the EU, the UK government has had to provide proposals to ensure that there is no 'hard' border between the North of Ireland and the Irish Republic. A key argument for leaving the European Union was that the UK would be able to reclaim its borders. Donald Trump, the US President, has pledged to build a wall along the border of the United States and Mexico. Millions of workers have fought and died in wars to defend national borders. It is assumed that they are as natural to humans as dams are to beavers, and are, therefore, a permanent feature of human society. This view is mistaken.

Borders with their customs and passport controls are part and parcel of the modern nation-state. We are expected to feel a belonging and loyalty to the nation, in which we happen to be born and raised. After all, do not most of us share the same culture and language? Maybe, but it does not follow, therefore, that we all have the same interests, for within each nation there are the capitalists, who own the means of production and live off the surplus created by the workers and therefore have an interest in minimising

their labour costs; workers, on the other hand, have an interest in achieving the highest price they can for their labour power. This sets the stage for class conflict.

The nation-state is not a natural entity, but a product of history. Its origins lay in the struggle by the aspiring capitalist class for political power from the 15th Century onwards. Once they succeeded in toppling the old feudal order, new states emerged which replaced the old feudal monarchies and empires and better served the needs of the new capitalist ruling class. The latter were able to enact laws which protected their private property rights, legitimised their ownership of the productive resources and their control over their workforce, and removed any institutional barriers to capitalist trade and commerce. Police forces were established to enforce these laws. As the state governed over a given area, a border was required to control the movement of people and commodities between the home nation and other nation-states, and, at times, it needed to be defended by a standing army against hostile foreign powers. Its purpose was and is to protect the property of the capitalist minority.

The foregoing also applies to the so-called 'communist' states that existed in the former Soviet bloc countries and still survive in North Korea and Cuba. These were state capitalist regimes, where the state took on the role of the capitalists.

Capitalism is also a product of history and is not a natural system. As feudalism was swept away by the revolutionary capitalist class, it is about time that the working class do the same with capitalism. Once capitalism is abolished, there will be no need for the nation-state, with its armed forces and borders. We will have a world society without any nation-states or borders.



## Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up



capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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## Tempus Non Fugit

SOCIALISTS WHO are not among today's socially-connected youth and who do not read *The Sun* newspaper will probably never have heard of Jack Maynard, the Brighton YouTube vlogger (like blogger, but with video, geddit?) and will certainly not care that he got himself thrown off *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here* late last year after just three days on the show. But the reason for his summary expulsion from this must-be-seen-on if not must-see show is revealing.

The YouTube 'star', it seemed, had sent a number of racist and homophobic slurs via his Facebook account which *The Sun*, that bastion of egalitarian and anti-discriminatory social values, felt morally obliged to bring to the nation's attention. Despite effusive apologies and energetic denials that these off-the-cuff remarks reflected his real views, Mr Maynard found himself an overnight toxic brand, leaving presenters Ant and Dec with no choice but to announce his immediate departure from the celeb-infested jungle. Oh the fickle finger of fate.

But wait. The slurs in question had been posted six years before, when the fifteen-minute celeb was aged just 17. It didn't matter. The tabloids had by now got the bit between their teeth and gleefully reported that Japing Jack had also sent text messages importuning a 14-year old girl for nude photos. Sexual exploitation being utterly foreign to the tabloids, this caused a sensation. It didn't matter that the girl herself, while agreeing that Jack had been a 'dickhead', also pointed out that "He was 16, I was 14. He didn't know how old I was, and I didn't know how old he was at the time. I cannot stress enough that the messages were harmless" (*The Sun*, 5 December).

You may also recall the suspension last year of Labour's MP for Sheffield Hallam, Jared O'Mara, following revelations of homophobic, sexist and racist remarks made online more than a decade previously. Leading the moral charge on that occasion was, surprise surprise, *The Sun*, which called it a disgrace that Labour bosses had known about these comments for a whole month prior to sacking Mr O'Mara. A whole month. Fancy. Meanwhile another source had this to say about Labour's supposed ethical inertia: "Labour has become cultish, and now values loyalty to the hard left more than suitability and capability" (BBC Online, 26 October: [bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-the-papers-41757057](http://bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-the-papers-41757057)).

What is becoming 'cultish' is the idea that whatever you have said at any point in your life remains and will forever remain your viewpoint, as if it is indelibly tattooed on your brain. Once, such comments would have been forgotten or at least hard to dig up. Now that one's entire history is available in real time on social media, it stops being history at all but becomes part of an extended and eternal present. You can say you've changed your view. You can say you don't believe those things anymore. But there is the evidence for all to see. You said them. You are guilty.

### All present and incorrect

One of the lesser known cognitive biases and a veritable plague in the world of bad historical fiction is a thing called 'presentism', in which people unfairly judge past ideas and events by the currently prevailing ethical assumptions. Presentism, also known as cultural hypocrisy, is at work in much of the media's deprecation of past sexual mores among certain celebs in



Jared O'Mara

the unreconstructed 1970s. It's not that past behaviours should necessarily be condoned or glossed over, but such revelations need to be leavened with some recognition that those times were different and that the world has moved on. This acknowledgment of time passing is precisely what is missing from the new illusion of the eternal present.

Much of physics, and indeed science in general, is based upon the principle of symmetry, of numbers balancing on both sides of the equation. But there is one crucial asymmetry upon which the physical universe is founded, and that is time. The second law of thermodynamics, also known as the law of entropy, states that the degree of disorder in any closed system must always increase, and never decrease, over time. In other words, time flows in just one direction. Broken cups cannot magically jump back from the

floor onto the table edge and reassemble themselves (despite what Stephen Hawking tried to argue in *A Brief History of Time*). Cold coffee cannot miraculously reheat itself. People cannot 'un-die'.

This law is the organising principle of matter. It is the thing which oversees the growth of complex systems and their ultimate death and dissipation into chaos. If this law were to be broken, if time were to stand still, not just life but all physical reality would disintegrate. What happens when our modern, virtual world breaks the same law? Does the virtual world also disintegrate? What would this disintegration look like?

It would look like what we've got: a world that remembers everything as contemporaneous, the way you watch an old movie whose actors are young while in the real world these same actors are old or dead. It would look like an eternal present where the actor exists side by side with his younger and older selves, extending sideways like an endless series of reflections between two mirrors. It would be a world with an infinity of stories served up in a Cinema of Babel, told for entertainment, without sequence and without consequence. It would be a world where nothing changes and where changes mean nothing. All contradictions exist side by side, without contradicting each other. All ideas are equally valid, all theoretic dials set to zero, all roads circular and all philosophy reinvented as postmodernism. It would be a world of trivia, of the existential absurd, of Bake-Off programmes and the unbearable lightness of being.

It is a world of pseudo-immortals who have forgotten how to forget. One thing we've already forgotten is that this eternal present is only about 20 years old. When Princess Diana died in 1997 the world-wide web was still being born. People still wrote letters and sent postcards from holiday and wrote cheques in supermarkets and got lost or stuck in traffic with no way to phone home. Nothing was instant except coffee and mashed potato. Social media meant reading the newspaper in the pub.

For revolutionaries, the eternal present is a place where change can't occur because people can't be allowed to change their minds. But we know this isn't true, and that socialists have come from all walks of life and all political backgrounds, including the Tory Party and even the far right. This is what revolution is. People change. If we remember everything else, let's not forget that.

PJS

## Human nature or human behaviour?

Dear Editors

I enjoy reading your magazine every month. It would seem wherever socialism is tried it ends up as state capitalism, probably because socialism is opposed to human nature. Humans are greedy by nature and are lovers of money.

I believe money [guilty] of 95 percent of the world's evils and problems and it will be money that eventually destroys the planet.

Like you I want a moneyless world based on the needs of all humanity and of course a peaceful world but again humans are aggressive by nature. How then do you change human nature?

D. Tandy, SITTINGBOURNE, Kent

### Reply:

Socialism has never been tried. State capitalism was indeed the result of the revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba and the rest but that's what the revolutionists set out to establish and succeeded, though unfortunately they called it 'socialism'.

There is no need to change 'human nature' – the gene-determined biological make-up of humans – as there is nothing in it that would prevent the establishment and operation of socialism. 'Human nature' and human behaviour are two different things. What our biological human *nature* makes possible is for humans to engage in a wide range of *behaviours*. Basically, human behaviour in general is

flexible and can and does adapt to the environment in which humans find themselves and/or are brought up in.

In conditions of material scarcity humans, to survive, need to acquire and secure what resources they can, even sometimes at the expense of others. Hence, in such circumstances, humans tend to behave in ways described as 'greedy', though for most of human existence most people have not been able to acquire much more than the bare necessities.

Capitalism is a system of artificial scarcity – the profit motive, or rather barrier, prevents the plenty for all that has been possible now for years from being produced – and so engenders behaviour that is 'greedy'. As capitalism is a

society where people have to buy what they need this takes the form of trying to get more money. But this is more as security against them and their offspring falling into poverty than a desire to accumulate more and more wealth for its own sake.

In a socialist society, where everybody will have a right of access to what they need to live and enjoy life, people won't need to chase and accumulate money, if only because as you point out money will be redundant when there's common ownership and production directly for use. In such circumstances, although people will still be concerned with their own survival, they won't need to be 'greedy'. After all, what would be the point of stockpiling things at the place where you live when you will be able to get them when you need them from the nearest store?

'Aggression' is one of the behaviours that human biological make-up makes possible, but it is not in-born and, once again, is a behaviour which manifests itself only under certain circumstances. It is certainly not a feature of everyday life. This is not a violent struggle of everyone

against everyone else. No society could survive on that basis.

Organised aggression takes place between societies, and in class-divided societies between states, and arises from struggles over resources. In past societies it was between tribes for hunting grounds or between herders and agriculturalists. In capitalism it is a struggle between capitalist states over sources of raw materials, trade routes, markets and investment outlets which, when the vital interest of a state is at stake, leads to war. So far are humans from being aggressive by nature – natural killers of other humans – that states

have to train people to be killers and engage in propaganda amongst the rest of their subjects to support wars and to regard those who do the actual killing as heroes.

In socialism there will be no competition over resources and so no drive that, when push comes to shove, leads to wars. The Earth's resources will have become the common heritage of all humanity, to be used for the benefit of all.

A copy of our booklet *Are We Prisoners of our Genes?*, which provides the scientific evidence for what we say, is in the post. Anyone wanting a copy should send a cheque for £5 made out to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" – *Editors*





# The case against capitalism

THINGS ARE not produced today to meet people's needs. They are produced to make a profit. And that's the cause of the problems we face.

Under the profit system profits always come first. Before providing basic services like health care and transport, before improving conditions at work, and before protecting the environment.

Look at the results. The health service is crumbling. The transport system is in chaos. Pollution is rife and the environment under attack. The poor have got poorer. Begging and homelessness have spread. Crime is rising. Racism is reviving. Business culture reigns supreme, with 'market force', 'competition' and 'profit' as the buzzwords.

Life is becoming more and more commercialised and empty. People are becoming isolated from each other, with drug abuse and mental illness on the increase. The standard of living may have gone up a bit for

some, but the standard of life is going down.

Under the profit system production is in the hands of profit-seeking business enterprises—whether state or privately owned—all competing to maximise the rate of return on the money invested in them. Decisions as to what to produce and how much, and how, and where to produce it, are not made in response to people's needs but in response to market forces.

The health and welfare of the workforce and the effects on the environment take second place. This is why at work we suffer speed-up, pain, stress, boredom, overwork and accidents. This is why we have to work long hours, shiftwork and nightwork.

This is why the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe are all polluted. This is why the Earth's non-renewable mineral and energy resources

are plundered. This is why natural balances are upset and the environment destroyed.

If we are going to improve things we are going to have to act for ourselves, without professional politicians or leaders of any kind. We are going to have to organise ourselves democratically to bring about a society geared to serving human needs not profits.

Production to satisfy people's needs. That's the alternative. But this is only going to be possible if we control production and the only basis on which this can be done is common ownership and democratic control. In a word, socialism.

But real socialism, not the elite-run dictatorships that collapsed a few years ago in Russia and east Europe—that was state capitalism, not socialism—nor the various schemes for state control being put forward by the Labour Party again. We are talking about a world community without frontiers. Only on this basis can world poverty, hunger and the destruction of the environment be ended.



## The money shuffling business

THERE IS trade and trade. Trade in tangible things – what most will understand by 'trade' – and trade in services. This was brought out by a news item in the *Times* (6 November):

'Data published by the Office for National Statistics last week showed that Guernsey, with a population of 63,000, was one of Britain's largest international trade partners and the sixth-largest consumer of British services, putting it ahead of major economies including Italy, China and Japan.'

In other words, the UK exports more services (not tangible goods of course) to the island than it does to the other countries mentioned. According to the statistics, export of services to the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands accounted in 2006 for 11 percent of all such exports.

What are these services? The ONS lists 52 of them, but excludes travel, transport and banking. On the list some such as technical advice on production

are useful in themselves. Most are only useful in a capitalist society and some only to capitalists and capitalist corporations: accounting, advertising, market research, management consultancy, public relations, legal services, leasing, financial services, merchanting.

As sales of technical advice on how to grow potatoes, tomatoes and flowers must be rather limited, it is not difficult to guess what the 'trade' in 'services' with Guernsey will be. And why. In a word, tax-dodging.

That some capitalists and corporations don't pay their fair share of taxes compared with other capitalists and corporations is not really of concern to socialists or to the wage and salary working class generally. But it does expose the hypocrisy of those who preach patriotism to the workers while in practice being, as they used say of the Northern Ireland Protestants, more loyal to the half-crown than to the Crown.

Trade is a buying and selling transaction but what is traded doesn't have to be tangible. Anything – in fact everything – can be bought and sold and, under capitalism, is. Some services such as health care, education and entertainment are useful in themselves, even though corrupted by being sold. Other services – all those concerned with money – are useful only under capitalism. They would

not make sense in a socialist society.

In fact, there would not be any trade or trading in socialism. There won't need to be as what is produced will be the common property of society and will just need to be moved from where it is produced to where it is needed (actually, technically this is still part of production). So, goods will still be moved from one part of the world to another. This won't be trade because no equivalent will have to be moved in the opposite direction. If people in some part of the world need farm machinery it will simply be shipped there. The same goes for food or minerals that can't be grown locally. There will be no expectation that something has to be shipped back in exchange. No doubt people will move from one part of the world to another to provide services like technical advice, training or health care. Once again, in exchange for nothing.

All the financial services necessary under capitalism – and the vast waste of resources and work involved in them – will disappear. The people of Guernsey will be able to give up shuffling about paper claims to wealth and concentrate on doing something useful, sure in the knowledge that, as with all communities, they will be provided with all the things they can't produce locally.



'As regards the working man swamping all other classes, the answer is simple—other classes have no right to exist. To prepare the way for the absolute supremacy of the working class, preparatory to the abolition of the system of classes, is the mission of 'The Red Republican.' (July 1850)

Ernest Jones was a lawyer, a poet, and a prominent Chartist agitator who was sent to prison in 1848 for two years. Upon his release, he continued his Chartist activities and together with his friend George Julian Harney tried to give the Chartist movement a more socialistic direction. He knew both Marx and Engels personally and was a member of the Manchester section of the International Workingmen's Association. Jones was committed to the wider international context of the workers' movement. He wrote in *The People's Paper* of 17 February, 1854:

'Is there a poor and oppressed man in England? Is there a robbed and ruined artisan in France? Well, then, they appertain to one race, one country, one creed, one past, one present, and one future. The same with every nation, every colour, every section of the toiling world. Let them unite. The oppressors of humanity are united, even when they make war. They are united on one point that of keeping the peoples in misery and subjection ... Each democracy, singly, may not be strong enough to break its own yoke; but together they give a moral weight, an added strength, that nothing can resist. The alliance of peoples is the more vital now, because their disunion, the rekindling of national antipathies, can alone save tottering royalty from its doom. Kings and oligarchs are playing their last card: we can prevent their game.'

In response to a lock-out of around 20,000 mill workers by the employers at Preston and also in an attempt to revive the Chartist Movement, Ernest Jones was the prime mover in assembling what was called, the Labour Parliament. Jones in the *-1487126032 People's Paper* for January 7, 1854, wrote:

'Every day brings fresh confirmation of the need for a mass movement and the speedy assembling of the Labour Parliament. If it is delayed much longer, every place, Preston included, lost or at the best forced into degrading and weakening compromises ... The Cotton Lords, at a 'Mass Meeting' of their own, unanimously resolved to support their brother Cotton Lords of Preston and Wigan with the full force of their funds. Under these circumstances it is class against class ... It must, therefore, become manifest that unless the working classes fight this battle as a Class, that is, in one universal union by a mass movement, they will be inevitably defeated ... The greater the lock-out, the wider the strike movement, the more national becomes the movement – the more of a class struggle it is rendered – and if the working classes once see that they are struck at as a class, their class instinct will be roused and they will rise and act as one man.'

The Parliament first met on March 6, 1854, at Manchester, and was attended by some fifty or sixty delegates, mainly from the textile unions. The Parliament's discussions lasted several days and when it broke up it declared its unfulfilled intention of meeting again at a later date that year. So in 1854, there met two Parliaments, and invited but unable to attend Marx was to remark:

'some future historian will have to record that there existed in the year 1854, two Parliaments: a Parliament at London and a Parliament at Manchester – a Parliament of the rich and a Parliament of the poor – but that men sat only in the Parliament of the men and not in the Parliament of the masters.'

The work of Ernest Jones for the Labour Parliament marks the culmination of his career as a revolutionary agitator. When, in 1858, the *-1487126034 People's Paper* ceased publication, Jones, worn out and disheartened became a Liberal for the last eight years of his life. While he still recognised the inherent evils of the

society he lived in, he resigned himself to an accommodation with it, "I am about to take the world as I find it, and see if we cannot make the best of it, such as it is, without any violent and sudden disruptions of Society." But this should not diminish his contribution to the cause of the working class. During the American Slave-owners War, he campaigned vociferously against slavery and against the Confederacy when it was trying to gain support from the cotton-mill workers who were suffering from the blockade. He died in Manchester on the 26 January, 1869, a day after his 50th birthday. An estimated 100,000 lined his funeral cortege. Ernest Jones, the son of a major, a barrister-at-law, and a published poet, died in such poverty that his friends had to launch a financial appeal for his widow and three children.

In 1780 less than 3 percent of Britain's 8 million population had electoral rights. From the late 18th century, pressure for parliamentary reform grew, culminating in riots in several British towns in 1831. Even after the 1832 Reform Act was finally passed, only one in seven adult males were able to vote. The Chartist movement was the first mass political movement of the British working class and effectively Britain's first civil rights movement. Many unknown and therefore unacknowledged workers engaged in the mass struggle for the vote and political power. As the factory and mill owners resisted any rebellion against the dictatorship of capital, Jones and fellow radicals such as Harney emphasized the connection between the struggle to win the vote and the class struggle. In addition, they also emphasised that this was just a part of a wider and greater international fight for democracy and people's power.

**ALJO**

The Greasy Pole column resumes next month.







# BREXIT and the Border

The Irish Border question has reared its ugly head again. The Border's roots go back to a split in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century between two sections of the capitalist class in Ireland. In the South were fledgling capitalists who wanted protective tariffs behind which to develop. In the North were the industrial capitalists – the Titanic was built in Belfast – who didn't want to be cut off behind tariff walls from free access to markets in the rest of Britain and its Empire.

At the founding convention of Sinn Fein in 1905 its leader, Arthur Griffith, put the case for the petty capitalists in the South:

'If an Irish manufacturer cannot produce an article as cheaply as an English or other foreigner, only because his foreign competitor has larger resources at his disposal, then it is the first duty of the Irish nation to accord protection to that Irish manufacturer ... Under the Sinn Fein policy ... no possibility would be left ... for a syndicate of unscrupulous English capitalists to crush out the home manufacturer and the home trader' (Sinn Fein Policy, 1907 edition, p. 15 and p. 23).

The President of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, J. Milner Balfour, put the point of view of the Northern capitalists in his evidence in July 1911 to the Committee on Irish Finance:

'I think that any attempt to set up an independent Customs in such a way as to enable the Irish Parliament to create a Tariff between Ireland and the United Kingdom would be a very dangerous thing' (Minutes of Evidence, Committee on Irish Finance, cmdnd 6799).

## Dragging the workers into it

Both sides involved the working class in their dispute. The Irish Nationalists and Home Rulers, representing the petty capitalists of the South, relied on the Catholic majority on the island of Ireland.

When Home Rule became an issue in the 1880s the Unionists, representing the big capitalists of the North, decided to play the 'Orange card', appealing to the Protestant majority in the North East, beating the Lambeg drum and declaring that 'Home Rule is Rome Rule'. As a result the working class came to be divided on religious sectarian lines.

In the end the matter was settled by force of arms, in the Anglo-Irish war of 1919-21. The Treaty that ended this war set up an 'Irish Free State' in 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland, with the remaining six in the North East staying in the UK, but with their own parliament. Politically, the fears of both sides came about. 'Home Rule' did indeed turn out to be 'Rome Rule' while Northern Ireland became a Protestant statelet where the Catholic minority were victims of systematic discrimination.

At the beginning the Border did not have much economic significance despite its immense political significance as it had never been accepted by a section of the Nationalists and was vehemently insisted on by the Unionists. It assumed economic significance after 1932 when the anti-Treaty wing of the Nationalists under De Valera came to power and began to pursue the original Sinn Fein policy of economic nationalism. The result was a tariff war between the Twenty-Six Counties and the UK which went on until 1938 and which involved the erection of a 'hard border' with customs posts between the South and the North East of Ireland.

## Anglo-Irish Free Trade

Successive Irish governments continued with the old Nationalist agenda of encouraging the development of Irish infant industries behind tariff walls. By the 1960s, however, both Ireland and Britain were keen to join what has now become the EU, but De Gaulle kept vetoing this. Instead, in 1965, Britain and Ireland signed an Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement which provided for Britain to abolish from 1 January 1966 all tariffs on Irish imports while Ireland would gradually reduce and eventually abolish tariffs on imports from the UK. From that point on, the economic significance

of the border was considerably reduced. Even more so after Britain and Ireland both joined the EU in 1973 and its customs union (erecting a common external tariffs on imports from outside the EU). The border still existed but, following the 1998 Good Friday agreement had become less politically contentious.

It has become a bone of contention again because of Brexit or, rather, because of the British government's political decision to interpret Brexit to mean withdrawing not just from the EU's political institutions but also from the customs union and single market and its common standards.

Withdrawal from the customs union means that the UK would no longer have to impose the same tariff on imports as the remaining members of the EU, including Ireland, have to on imports from outside the EU into their country. In fact, the EU would have to impose the common external tariff on all goods entering Ireland from the UK, including from Northern Ireland.

## Ghosts from the past

In contrast to a hundred years ago, neither the capitalists of the North nor those of the South of Ireland want an economic border on the island of Ireland. Both parts of the island are now more or less the same economically. Both are eager to attract overseas investment. In this respect there is still a difference – the rate at which profits are taxed in the two parts of Ireland. In the South the rate is much lower.

The DUP have been campaigning for Northern Ireland to have the power to align corporation tax with that in the South rather than being tied to that in the rest of the UK. This shows that their public humiliation of Theresa May when she was first in Brussels at the beginning of December to sign a deal on the matter was politically motivated, a reflection of the sectarian backwoodsmen and women that they are. They no longer represent the interest of capitalists in Northern Ireland. On this issue they don't even represent the views of those who voted in the referendum as a majority in Northern Ireland voted Remain, i.e. to keep the status quo with no change to the border.

The problem is that hatreds stirred up by rival sections of the capitalist class in the past cannot be turned off just like that. They have a tendency to continue beyond their usefulness to those sections and come to haunt their successors, causing political problems. In the case of Ireland the Theresa May government has found this out the hard way, especially as they chose to do a deal with the DUP to get a parliamentary majority. Sinn Fein, too, is a prisoner of dogmas

inherited from the intra-capitalist disputes of yesteryear – if their 7 Westminster MPs took their seats they could counter the 10 DUP MPs, but they refuse to do so as they are not prepared to go through the empty formality of swearing allegiance to 'the Crown'.

Trade and tariffs are not really an issue for the majority class of wage and salary workers. These – and the politics associated with them – are capitalist issues of concern only to the capitalist class which that class can be left to settle itself. The trouble is that, in such intra-capitalist disputes, the working class suffer collateral damage in the sense of being stirred up against each other. In Northern Ireland this impeded the development even of ordinary, reformist Labourite, let alone revolutionary socialist, politics. For years there was only one issue in every election, towards which parties had to situate themselves – the Border. It really would be a tragedy if the sectarian conflicts of the past were to be re-ignited by short-sighted political decisions, as happened in the 1960s.

Borders are borders separating one capitalist state from another and have always been a nuisance for workers, impeding their free movement. Creating new borders, or reviving old ones, only makes things worse. And, besides, is a step away from the socialist aim of a world without frontiers. ADAM BUICK

Mural from the bad old days of sectarianism





*After discussing some possible features of a socialist society, Colin Skelly contrasts how agriculture is carried out in capitalism with how it could be transformed in socialism.*

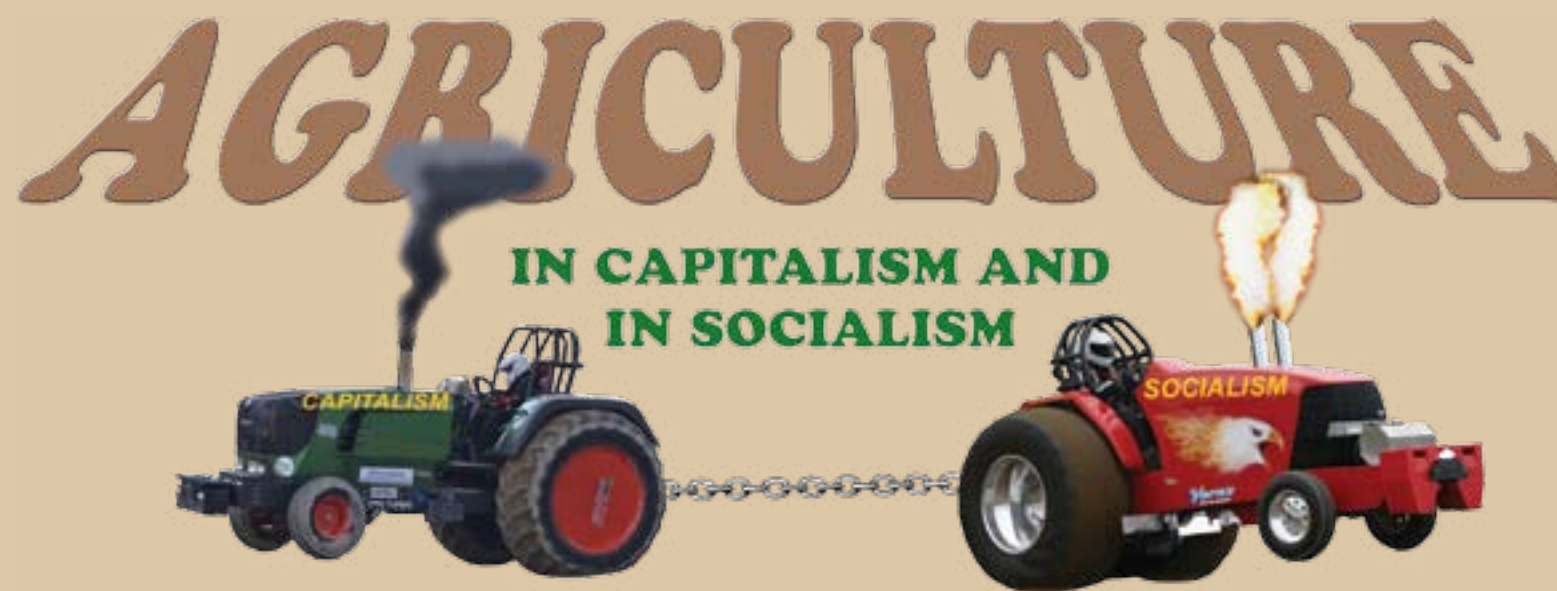
‘[The] technological and demographic developments of the last few centuries have created conditions which are here to stay. In relatively densely settled populations with the goods which are indispensable to their continued existence, an extreme division of labor and a highly – centralised productive apparatus are absolutely necessary. The time – which, looking back, seems so idyllic – is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption’, Albert Einstein ‘Why Socialism?’, *Monthly Review*, May 1949).

Einstein’s view of socialism as utilising and continuing the ever more extreme division of labour prevalent in capitalist production is a logical one. As Marx pointed out, a major contradiction at the heart of capitalism is that the working class has access to a relatively decreasing proportion of the value produced by their labour (despite often also being absolutely better off materially than preceding generations). It makes complete sense then, that some socialists would see the immediate goal of our global revolution as being to enable the equalisation of the vast productive output of global labour.

Yet contrast Einstein’s view with that of William Morris in his vision of the socialist future, *News From Nowhere* (told as the story of how the socialist revolution had occurred by the character Old Hammond):

‘...he [Old Hammond] had a detailed record of the period of the change to the present state of things, and told us a great deal about it, and especially of that exodus of the people from the town to the country, and the gradual recovery by the town-bred people on one side, and the country-bred people on the other, of those arts of life which they had each lost; which loss, as he told us had at one time gone so far that not only was it impossible to find a carpenter or a smith in a village or a small country town, but that people in such places had even forgotten how to bake bread... He told us also that the townspeople who came into the country used to pick up the agricultural arts by carefully watching the way in which the machines worked, gathering an idea of handicraft from machinery; because at that time almost everything was done by elaborate machines used quite unintelligently by the labourers. On the other hand, the old men amongst the labourers managed to teach the younger ones gradually a little artisanship, such as the use of the saw and the plane, the work of the smithy, and so forth; for once more by that time it was as much as – or rather, more than – a man could do to fix an ash pole to a rake by handiwork; so that it would take a machine worth a thousand pounds, a group of workmen, and a half a day’s travelling, to do five shillings’ worth of work’ (Chapter 27, *The Upper Waters*).

Today, with stories abounding about the displacement of human employment with robots, such a view is highly relevant. Now we in the Socialist Party know that robots will not end our role as wage slaves – we need to do that ourselves – but with the technical possibility of displacing many



forms of human labour, how would we choose work in the socialist future? Marx made a distinction between immediate and developed communism in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*; socialism as established on day one would not be the same as socialism 5, 10, 20, 50 years later.

### Day One

Socialism on Day One would surely involve, to borrow some phrases from Engels, the replacement of the government of persons by the administration of things and the anarchy of production in capitalism by the conscious direction of the processes of production. The working class would be in the driving seat politically and socially meaning that the productive potential of the Earth’s resources combined with human technical potential would be at our collective command. Equality would be established in terms of our individual and collective relation to the means of production. We would be at a point where we no longer worked for money wages but one in which each of us would put in our mental and physical labours to social production and each of us would take out what we need from the surplus of production destined for immediate consumption. To borrow from Marx this time, labour would be given according to the abilities of those giving it and the products of collective labour taken according to individual needs.

But the point of socialism is more than a striving for equality for its own sake. There is much more to socialism than arguments about what will be produced and how it will be distributed. In fact, equality of access to means of production is merely a means to an end, the social and political expression of a deeper need, the need, as Morris expressed it, for our labour to be ‘set free’. Marx was very clear in *Capital* and elsewhere, that socialism would be the conscious management of production for the first time in human history. It would give us, both as individuals and as a global society, the means to shape our own lives, ‘the pursuit of the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers etc., of individuals, produced in universal exchange.’ Socialism will surely not involve us going to work as normal, not even on Day One. It will surely be about more than having a say in what is produced and taking only what you need. It will involve a massive change in how you work, how you relate to what is produced. Because you wouldn’t have to work. To borrow from Marx yet again, the free development of each of us would allow the free development of all of us.

In other words, although compulsion will be removed from work, our new free relation to it will ensure that, in fact, more productive work will happen. Which is why, although Einstein was right that socialism will continue to be ‘a planetary community of production and consumption’ and not a move to self-sufficiency, his vision of a highly centralised world with extreme division of labour is, for this socialist at least, further from what socialism will look like than that of William Morris.

### Agriculture under capitalism

So, how might agriculture look in a socialist future? To start, we might contrast in broad strokes what global agriculture in capitalism looks like compared to a reasoned guess at what it might look like in a socialist society. Agriculture in capitalism is one dominated by production of plant and animal crops for sale in a global market in which import and export occur on a massive scale and in which more industrialised countries import food (where obesity is literally a growing problem) and less industrialised countries export food (even where populations may be malnourished). Intensive production is pervasive, trying to squeeze every last bit of plant or animal out of every square metre to the exclusion of all other considerations. Animals destined for meat are kept indoors in the smallest possible unit of space and dosed on antibiotics and given dubious food inputs in order to keep them alive and growing at the optimum rate for the earliest possible harvesting. Mechanisation is constantly developing under pressure of competition, squeezing human labour out of the process of production and making the machinery ever more complex and expensive. Production is finely specialised, individual farms concentrating on a very narrow range of plants or animals to the exclusion of all other crops. Agriculture is ecologically unsustainable, denuding soils of ecological health due to reliance on chemical fertilisers, pesticides and monocultures leading to further negative impacts on biodiversity, soil erosion and human health. Agriculture in capitalism is industrialised and exclusively rural, sharply delineated from urban life. Relationships are dependent – between food importing and exporting countries, between agrochemical companies and growers, between town and country.

Agriculture in socialism, whilst involving the widespread transfer of foodstuffs around the world, would not involve the imbalance between imports and exports that currently reflects global economic imbalance. It is likely that food production

in a given geographic area would be planned to maximise the amount and variety available locally and regionally rather than dominated by one crop destined for export. An amount of surplus, perhaps of particular speciality crops, would probably be made available for exporting globally. Production would likely be more extensive than intensive as collective decisions about land use would replace the competitive pressure to maximise per unit yields of a narrow range of crops. The need for the routine dosing of animals grown for meat would disappear with the end of the compulsion to keep them in the smallest possible unit of space with the least inputs. Mixed farming would probably replace monoculture with multiple types of crops, enabling a total larger yield of crops per acre across the year. The drive for mechanisation would continue where dull, monotonous tasks were desired to be eradicated but the increased variety and range of work would make the need for machines that would run with minimal human input across acres of monoculture a thing of the past.

Mixed farming would remove the need for reliance on chemical fertiliser inputs, replenishing soil fertility with animal wastes and, over time, restoring the ecological health of soils. The need for pesticides would be reduced as a greater range of crops would remove the risk of catastrophic crop failure and greater resilience of total crop yields. In turn, this would allow for a far greater biodiversity on farm land leading to a further drop in reliance on chemical inputs as a more balanced ecology replaced the ecological desert that is monoculture. The economic pressures leading to the rural and urban divide would cease to exist and the distinction between town and country would probably give way to a more balanced use of land, although doubtless population distribution would reflect the physical characteristics and productive potential of the land. Local, small scale and part-time production of food would probably increase because of free access to land alongside larger mixed farms. Interdependent relationships in food production would replace dependence

No one wants to grow in the way that food production is carried out in capitalism. In fact, farmers in capitalism do not want to farm in this way but are compelled to do so under the competitive pressure of the market. Freed from this burden, the range of people engaged in producing food would increase and land use patterns alter drastically. The productive potential of the land combined with the scientific and technical knowledge developed during the course of capitalist production will enable social production on a new economic basis. Consciously planned production, probably at local, regional and global levels, would replace production for the market. This planning would reflect local, regional and global needs but, as importantly, what those engaged in agriculture might want to produce and how they might choose to produce it.

COLIN SKELLY



# Profit in Agriculture: a Negative for People & the Planet

The rift between governments, big corporations and transnational trade agreements on the one hand, and majority populations the world over on the other, is reinforced by global factors linking large-scale commercial agriculture, and its food production and manufacture, with climate change.

Examples abound of laws being changed to negatively affect people, while corporations and businesses are encouraged to expand their reach and their profits. We currently have a global David and Goliath situation in which millions of Davids are being thrown to the wolves by a much smaller number of Goliaths in pursuit of sheer profit. Those Goliaths are neither interested in good, wholesome food crops, nor in protecting the health of the soil, nor the viability of the long-term water supply, nor the state of the planet. They are not even remotely concerned for the future of any of the Davids thrown off their lands.

The four biggest crops grown by large-scale commercial agricultural companies are soya bean, palm oil, rapeseed and sugar cane – all monocrops, some grown for energy production, but most for processed food commodities for the global market. These crops are grown on land once used to feed local farmers and populations with a wide range of fresh crops and animals, or in mega plantations created by destroying prime forests, which previously provided food and materials to indigenous peoples and grazing for their animals, and for whom the land is now off limits. In fifty years, 140 million hectares of these fields and forests (a similar area to the whole of the EU farmland) have been taken over for just these four crops.

## Commercial fertilisers and greenhouse gas emissions

The very basis of farming to produce food is soil. Soil provides necessary nutrients for plants, and to be healthy and balanced it needs thoughtful husbandry. For hundreds of generations humans have recognised the symbiosis of plants and animals; the need for nutrients from animals and rotation of crops for continued healthy, balanced soil filled with humus, worms and useful microbes.

One huge problem for soil and consequently for crops, exacerbated by the profit system, is that of commercial fertilisers. The Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture, launched in 2014 at the UN Summit on Climate Change in New York would seem, from its name, to represent a positive move towards achieving good results for people and planet, but of the twenty nine non-governmental founding members three are fertiliser industry lobby groups, two of whom are the worlds largest fertiliser companies (Yara of Norway and Mosaic of the US), while several others work directly with fertiliser companies on climate change programmes. Currently 60 percent of the private sector members of this alliance come from the fertiliser industry.

Nitrogen fertilisers need huge amounts of energy to produce and are made almost entirely from natural gas. Production of this fertiliser from natural gas is expected to grow at around 4 percent a year over the next decade,

relying increasingly on natural gas from fracked wells which can leak 40-60 percent more methane (25 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>) than conventional natural gas wells. These emissions during production, however, are just a fraction of the greenhouse gas emissions which occur once the fertilisers are applied to the soil.

## The global commercial food system

The global commercial food system, increasing annually, has proved to be a huge contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Besides the problem of fertilisers, there is the question of extensive mono-crop cultivation of feed for animals kept in enormous compounds. Crops for animal feed may be grown in Argentina, fed to chickens in Chile, shipped to China for processing, and exported to the US for sale in McDonalds. Cows and pigs are bred for meat in massive lots, producing tons of waste, fouling water systems, and releasing huge volumes of methane. Added to this, sheep in flocks of thousands eventually reach their optimum weight and, as with the beef and pork, are shipped thousands of miles before being on display for sale. When all the available data on the various sources of GHG emissions from the global food system is put together, farm to table, it reveals that this system is responsible for about half of all global emissions, from chemical fertilisers, heavy machinery run on petrol, hugely concentrated livestock operations, global transport, manufacture and processing, to unbelievable amounts of waste.

## Small farms and productivity

Although small farms on average consist of about 2.2 hectares (5 acres) globally, they hold less than 25 percent of world farmland (excluding China and India small farms control 17.2 percent), yet their numbers total between 85-90 percent of total farms. Shrinking numbers from forced expulsion and shrinking sizes due to inheritance laws mean that year on year small farms constitute less of the whole. Even within this scenario, small farms continue to produce considerably more food than the conglomerates and more productively, i.e. more food per acre, as this is recognised by the UN Environment Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Food and Agricultural Organisation. Two examples:



Brazil – 84 percent of farms are small and control 24 percent of land, but produce 87 percent of cassava, 69 percent of beans, 67 percent of goat's milk, 59 percent of pork, 58 percent of cow's milk, and even 30 percent of cattle.

Russia – small farms have 8.8 percent of land, from which they produce 56 percent of total agricultural output including 90 percent of potatoes, 83 percent of vegetables, 55 percent of milk and 39 percent of meat.

This may be a surprise to many, but studies certainly reveal that overall small farms are considerably more productive than big farms and produce is less contaminated with chemicals. Twenty countries of the EU, for instance, have a higher rate of production on small farms and nine of those countries register productivity which is at least double that of big farms. The remaining seven countries where the big farms are more productive reveal that it is by a small margin. One of the reasons offered for this is the low levels of employment used on big farms in order to maximise return on investment.

Other examples are Kenya, where data shows that if all big farms had productivity equal to that of small ones, then national production would double; in Central America and Ukraine it would triple; in Hungary and Tajikistan it would increase by 30 percent; and in Russia it would increase six times over.

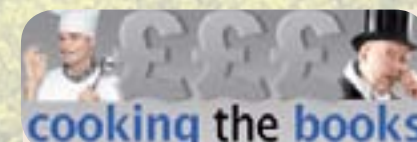
These small farms tended by millions of global citizens, both female and male, have the knowledge and the great diversity of crops and animals to farm productively without the use of chemicals, improving soil fertility and preventing erosion. Currently, all over the planet, millions of these individuals and families are living a precarious existence, because of the pressures from global capitalist measures stacked against them. Surely food is sustenance necessary for all, simply to survive, not a commodity to be bought and sold. The current

system views anything but profit as secondary, something to be ignored or eliminated. Simple logic says profit is a negative in food production.

We can only begin to imagine how agriculture could thrive and develop post capitalism when all thought of profit has disappeared from the scene, when no time has to be spent by organisations trying to counter the negatives of capitalism, trying to conquer the hunger of huge numbers of people, and when farmers are recognised for their pivotal role in the well-being of both the planet and all its inhabitants. When farmers are free to use methods that help to alleviate harmful emissions and begin to cool the planet as they restore, rather than destroy, the soil.

(Acknowledgement to [www.grain.org](http://www.grain.org))

JANET SURMAN



## More unequal than Croesus

A STUDY into social inequality throughout human history and prehistory published in the journal *Nature* concluded – or, rather, confirmed, since this is generally accepted – that it was the adoption of agriculture that permitted social inequality to come about and to take off. In previous, hunter-gatherer societies, as the researchers noted, there were 'not a lot of opportunities for people to have more than others' (*Times*, 16 November).

With agriculture and the settled life it involved, on the other hand, not only could more wealth be produced but the extra wealth could be accumulated in the hands of those who owned land and working animals. That this is what did happen was, as Engels put it, the origin of the family, private property, and the state. The researchers added something new by pointing to the importance of large domesticated animals being put to work. This only happened in the old

world and was why, they concluded, inequality was greater there than in the new world (until it was conquered by people from the old world).

This was not just theoretical speculation on their part. They came up with an objective standard to measure social inequality. Taking the size of dwellings, as for the past uncovered and recorded by archaeologists, they used the ratio of the smallest to the largest to estimate inequality:

'The paper converted the house size ratios into the gini coefficient, a measure used today in which "0" means no inequality and "1" means the highest possible inequality. Hunter-gatherer societies had a gini coefficient of about 0.17, an egalitarianism not now matched by any country. When people shifted to growing crops, it grew, to 0.35. When Rome was at its height it was 0.48. In Britain today, it stands at about 0.7.'

In other words, capitalism is a much more unequal society than ancient slave societies or feudalism. Capitalists are more unequal than Croesus. This must come as an inconvenient surprise to defenders of capitalism. Their riposte will be that modern wage and salary workers are better off than chattel slaves or serfs.

This is incontestably true, but that's not the point about inequality. Inequality is relative.

Marx used the same example of the size of dwellings to make this point:

'A house may be large or small; as long as the neighbouring houses are likewise small, it satisfies all social requirement for a residence. But let there arise next to the little house a palace, and the little house shrinks to a hut. The little house now makes it clear that its inmate has no social position at all to maintain, or but a very insignificant one; and however high it may shoot up in the course of civilization, if the neighbouring palace rises in equal or even in greater measure, the occupant of the relatively little house will always find himself more uncomfortable, more dissatisfied, more cramped within his four walls (...) Our wants and pleasures have their origin in society; we therefore measure them in relation to society; we do not measure them in relation to the objects which serve for their gratification. Since they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature' (*Wage-Labour and Capital*).



On several occasions Lenin wrote or spoke about a phenomenon that he called ‘state capitalism’. He took a favorable view of this phenomenon, regarding it as progressive. State capitalism, he argued, was not socialism but it was (or would be) a step forward toward socialism, especially for backward Russia.

Lenin first expressed this view in September 1917, the month before the Bolsheviks seized power, in a pamphlet entitled *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*. He reiterated it in March 1918 in an article on the ‘Brest Peace’ with Germany. He asserted the same view repeatedly during the last three years of his life (1921–24) – for example, in January 1923 in an article for a Russian emigre newspaper (‘To the Russian Colony in North America’).

But what did Lenin mean by ‘state capitalism’? To answer this question we must study his statements carefully and place them in their contemporary context, as Lenin’s theorising was always a response to an immediate situation.

### Three phases

We must also bear in mind that between the revolution of October 1917 and Lenin’s death in January 1924 the Russian economy passed through three distinct phases:

From October 1917 to the middle of 1918 the situation was very complicated. In March 1918 Lenin speaks of an ‘intermingling’ of five elements: natural economy (households producing for their own consumption), petty commodity production, private capitalism, state capitalism, socialism).

From the middle of 1918 to early 1921 (the period of the Civil War) the Supreme Council of National Economy attempted to administer industry directly – that is, without using money where deemed possible. This system was later dubbed ‘war communism’.

In March 1921 the regime introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), under which formal market relations were restored and industry was run by private enterprises and state trusts.

Lenin’s statements about state capitalism all appear in the first and third of these phases. He does not discuss the subject during the period of ‘war communism’.

### The German war economy

The earliest works in which Lenin discusses ‘state capitalism’ appeared when World War One was still raging in Europe. Here he declares that ‘the most concrete example of state capitalism is in Germany’. In order to ensure the reliable functioning of the war machine, the German government had imposed strict controls over industry. The state not only regulated prices and subsidised the building of new factories but also reshaped the corporate structure and coordinated the allocation of materials. For instance, the Raw Materials Section of the War Ministry set up ‘war corporations’ – eventually about 200 of them – that though privately owned operated under state supervision. Neither private ownership nor production for profit was abolished, but the state directly involved itself in running the economy to an unprecedented degree.

Lenin acknowledged that the German state and its war economy remained subordinate to the German capitalist



class and ultimately served its interests. Similar collaboration between private capitalists and the state could play a much more progressive role in Russia because there state power belonged to ‘the working class’. State capitalism in Soviet Russia was ‘a form of capitalism deliberately permitted and restricted by the working class’. For Lenin this made it not merely a form of capitalism but also a transitional form between capitalism and socialism (we

leave the reader to ponder the logic or illogic of this position).

Here, of course, Lenin mystically equates ‘the working class’ with his own party. The real working class soon lost any identification it had initially felt with the Bolshevik regime.

In March 1918 Lenin described ‘state capitalism’ as just one of five elements in the economy of Soviet Russia. The significance of state capitalism increased enormously with introduction of the NEP in March 1921. Lenin called state capitalism ‘one of the principal aspects’ of the NEP.

### Attracting foreign capital

State capitalism under the NEP took various forms. One major form was long-term leasing of productive assets to domestic or foreign capitalists under specific conditions. Lenin attached special importance to the leasing of assets – so-called ‘concessions’ – to foreign capitalists (concessionaires), for ‘without foreign capital to help develop our economy its rapid rehabilitation is inconceivable’. Assets offered on this basis included the oilfields at Baku and Grozny in the Caucasus (although local ‘communists’ evidently did not like the idea).

Lenin was disappointed that so few takers could be found. One early concessionaire was a young American doctor named Armand Hammer, whom Lenin persuaded to take an asbestos concession in the Urals. Later in his life, as chairman of the Occidental Petroleum Corporation, Hammer was to forge new commercial links between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The NEP also led to the creation of trusts that brought together groups of similar enterprises located in the same region. These trusts were wholly state-owned but were run as autonomous profit-making units selling their output on the market. The system of state trusts was at that time considered a form of ‘state capitalism’. (In 1968 a similar system was established in Hungary under the name of the New Economic Mechanism and labeled as ‘market socialism’, but Lenin still assumed that the market and socialism were incompatible.)

### Debate on ‘the nature of the Soviet system’

The Marxist debate on ‘the nature of the Soviet system’ has focused almost exclusively on the system of the so-called ‘planned economy’ that was created under Stalin at the end of the 1920s and which lasted about sixty years, finally collapsing as a result of Gorbachev’s reforms. Lenin never said anything specifically about this system – for the simple reason that it did not arise until four or five years after his death. No one knows what he would have thought of it. Although it too is a form of state capitalism, it can be argued that it differed in certain key ways from the phenomena that Lenin had in mind when he wrote about ‘state capitalism’ at an earlier stage of the development of capitalism in Russia.

STEFAN

## A Turkish journalist puts a number of questions to us.

### 1- How do you define socialism?

Socialism is a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the natural and industrial resources of the world by and the interest of all humanity. On this basis production can be carried on to provide directly for people’s needs, with distribution of the products on the principle of ‘from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs’. It will be a world without frontiers, a classless, stateless, moneyless society. Socialism has never been tried anywhere and in fact could not exist just in one country,

### 2- How do you define capitalism?

Capitalism is a system of society based on the ownership and control of the means of production by a minority class and where production, carried out by wage workers, is for sale on a market with a view to profit. Capitalism has been the predominant world economic system for well over a hundred years and now exists all over the world.

### 3- As a socialist party why didn’t you support Corbyn in the 8th June elections? Opposing austerity measures is not enough to be called as socialist but isn’t it more favourable to think building a social state is easier and more realistic than building a full socialist society?

We didn’t support Corbyn and the Labour Party in these elections as the Labour Party does not stand for socialism but seeks merely to reform capitalism to make it work for the majority. The reforms it proposes are attractive at one level – who would not like to see an end to austerity? – but both experience and an understanding of how the capitalist economic system works show that no government can make capitalism work in the interest of the majority. Capitalism is governed by economic laws which dictate that priority be given to profits and conditions for profit-making. In the end, all governments, including previous Labour governments with a similar programme to what Corbyn is now proposing, have ended up falling in line with this capitalist economic reality and maintaining austerity (or, if they initially relaxed it, re-imposing it) in the form of wage restraint, service cuts, benefit cuts and the like. So, no, it is not ‘easier and more realistic’ to build a ‘social state’ under capitalism than to build socialism. It’s impossible.

### 4- What do you think about the outcomes of the 8th June elections?

The better than expected result for Labour will have reflected some increase in discontent with what capitalism imposes on people, even though Labour was not offering a viable way-out and would not have been able to deliver on its promises if it had won. And Brexit was clearly an issue for many, boosting the Labour vote considerably in pro-Remain areas. But ultimately, it was a routine election in which the workers again voted to continue to allow the capitalist class to retain its control of political power through parties which all stood for capitalism, the Labour Party under Corbyn included.

### 5- What is ‘world socialism’? What are the differences between your thought on world socialism and Trotsky’s permanent revolution theory?

Socialism can only exist as world socialism since the society it will take over from, capitalism, already is global. So, Trotsky was right to say that socialism could not exist in one country and that the socialist revolution would have to be a world revolution, even if it was not clear what he meant by socialism and that his conception of revolution, where merely discontented workers would be led by a vanguard party, is not ours but is deeply flawed.

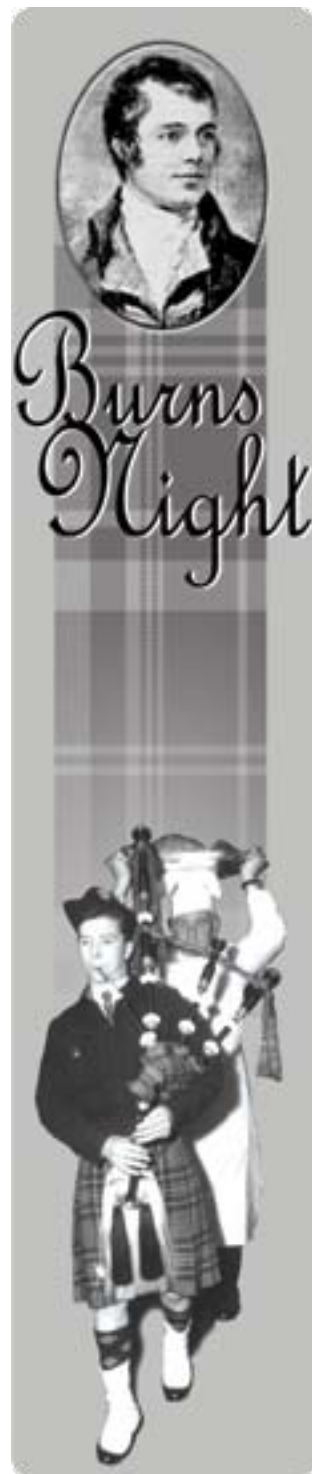
### 6- You’re not supporting Corbyn’s plan of nationalisation of railways because you are supporting common ownership. What are the differences between state ownership and common ownership?

Nationalisation is where the state becomes the owner of an industry, usually by buying it but sometimes by confiscating it. It is not the same as common ownership as the state represents the interest of a minority only, whether the capitalist class as a whole or some group who have got control of it. As the industry continues to be operated by wage workers and continues to produce for sale on a market with a view to profit, it is best described as ‘state capitalism’. Common ownership on the other hand, is where all productive resources (not just selected industries) belong in common to society as a whole; which is the same as them belonging to nobody. They will simply be there to be used, under various kinds of democratic control, to provide what people need. Common ownership implies that people no longer need to sell their working skills to an employer and so the abolition of the wages system. It also implies production directly and solely for use, so making money redundant.

### 7- What do you think about post-materialist movements like environmentalist, feminist or LGBT movements? Are you advocating the argument that ‘we are not living in Victorian Britain any more, the times have changed and these groups are useful for our cause’ or are you defending the idea that ‘industrial revolution has passed long ago but still the working classes are the most progressive ones’?

We have never held the view that industrial workers alone will be the agent to establish socialism since our conception of the working class has been broader than this, including all those obliged by economic necessity to sell their mental and physical energies for a wage or salary whatever the job they do, today in the developed capitalist parts of the world the vast majority of the population. We have always held that socialism will mean ‘the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex’. In other words, that it will end all oppression and discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Such discrimination divides the class of wage and salary workers whereas socialism can only be achieved when workers unite to bring it about. We are opposed to ‘identity politics’ as this, too, divides the working class. We still see socialism as the outcome of the class struggle of the working class (in the broad sense) pursuing its interest for a better material life and a better quality of life. We don’t know what will spark off the mass movement for socialism but concern for the environment could be a factor. In any event, as capitalism and its pursuit of profit is the cause of damage to the environment, the aim of the environmentalist movement can only be achieved in socialist society; at some point they may come to realise this.





On 25 January Scots people round the world celebrate Burns night, piping in the haggis along with the neeps and tatties (turnips and potatoes), and all the rest of it, to celebrate Burns' birthday. What do socialists think of Burns? Is it possible that Burns could be called a socialist?

The answer must be 'No'. In the eighteenth century the co-operative, friendly, work-together society that socialists strive for had not yet been crystallised into a political programme; the aggressive, snarling, stab-in-the-back society that capitalism tries to impose on us all was triumphant, or about-to-be-triumphant, everywhere in the world. And Burns was a Scots nationalist ('Scots whahaewi' Wallace bled ...).

Yet there are many facets of Burns' poetry, and of Burns' philosophy, that must strike a chord with all socialists (and it is well worth making the effort, though sometimes it's not easy, to understand Burns' Ayrshire dialect of our common language.) For example, Burns was always (just like socialists) able to see the larger significance of what appeared to be small, unimportant events – to see the greater meaning lying behind something apparently trivial. There are two well-known examples.

In church one day Burns sat near a well-to-do lady, dressed in her Sunday finery, seemingly pleased with her smart appearance. But then Burns saw a louse, openly crawling up

her fashionable bonnet. Burns enjoys the joke, pretending to tell the louse to clear out, and get its dinner off some ragged beggar instead; but then the contrast between the lady in her posh clothes, and the "winks and finger-ends" which showed that other people had seen the louse, leads to a thought of deeper moment:

'Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us,  
To see oursels as ithers see us, It wad frae mony a blunder free us, An' foolish notion;  
What airs in dress and gait wad lea'e us,  
And e'en devotion!'

Then there was the time when Burns was out ploughing one December – he had a small farm – and suddenly realised that he had destroyed a mouse's hide-out, which it had constructed with much labour to shelter itself from the winter weather ("That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble, Has cost thee mony a weary nibble"). The poet apologises for breaking 'Nature's social union', and goes on:

'But Mousie, thou are no thy lane, [you aren't alone]  
In proving foresight may be vain  
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men,  
Gang aft agley, [often go wrong]  
An'lea'e us nought but grief and pain,  
For promis'd joy!'

Then Burns added an extra verse. In some ways, he thought, it could be said the mouse was better off, being only concerned with the present; while the poet could see nothing to please him in either the past or the future. 'But Och! I backward cast my e'e, On prospects drear! An' forward, tho I canna see, I guess and fear!'

Burns had little time for the social set-up of his day. In *The Two Dogs*, Burns describes a landlord:

'Our laird gets in his racked rents,  
His coals, his kane, and all his stents, [kane - fowls paid as rent, stents – dues]  
He rises when he likes himself,  
His flunkies answer at his bell;'

He travels in a horse-drawn coach, and his silk purse is full of gold pieces. As for the landlord's factor or land-agent, when the rent is due he tyrannises over the impecunious small tenants:

'Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,  
How they maun thole a factor's snash: [must endure his abuse]  
He'll stamp an' threaten, curse and swear,  
He'll apprehend them, take their gear; [he'll collar them, take their possessions]  
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,  
An' hear it a', an' fear and tremble!'

Then in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* Burns praises 'an honest man', while dismissing his supposed social superiors – 'Princes and lords are but the breath of kings':

'What is a lordling's pomp! A cumbrous load,  
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,  
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!'

Perhaps Burns' philosophy is most clearly expressed in *A man's a man for a' that*.

'The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The Man's the gowd [gold] for a' that.'  
As for the upper class:  
'Ye see yon birkie [bighead], ca'd [called] a lord,  
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;  
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,  
He's but a coof [fool] for a' that:

For a' that, and a' that,  
His ribband, star [decorations], and a' that,  
The man of independent mind,  
He looks and laughs at a' that'.

Then Burns sums it up:  
'Then let us pray [earnestly desire] that come it may,  
(As come it will for a' that,.)

That Sense and Worth, o'er all the earth,  
Shall bear the gree, [be victorious], an' a' that.  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
It's coming yet for a' that,  
That Man to Man, the world o'er,  
Shall brothers be for a' that.'

If you take 'Man' to be all humans, or if you add 'Woman to Woman shall sisters be', it's a sentiment that socialists share.

**ALWYN EDGAR**



## Out Of The Blue

PROGRAMMES LIKE *Blue Planet II* (BBC1) make us feel a bit less begrudging if and when we cough up for our TV Licence. A follow-up to 2001's *Blue Planet*, the epic documentary series is a fascinating look at life in the world's oceans. Its production involved 125 expeditions across four years, using the latest camera technology to record more than 6,000 hours of underwater dive footage alone. The lengths which the researchers and camera crews took to get the right shots shows an impressive amount of determination, such as staking out places over months waiting for rare events, like the Marbled Grouper Fish's annual spawning in French Polynesia. The end result is both a jaw-dropping spectacle and a valuable piece of research, which has netted over 13 million viewers for Auntie Beeb.

David Attenborough is our guide as each episode takes us somewhere different, from coastlines to the deepest depths, with their own colourful, interconnected, varied ecosystems. The more we learn about the creatures which live in and around the oceans, the more complex they turn out to be. Who knew, for example, that Clown Fish make noises and apparently communicate with each other, almost like they do in *Finding Nemo*? Or that Orca Whales perform backflips into shoals of herring to stun them before eating them? Both of these species are impacted upon by the ways we use and abuse the seas: noise from boats confuses Clown Fish by drowning out their own sounds, and Orca Whales have been killed by the fishing fleets they're competing with for herring. *Blue Planet II*'s last instalment concentrates on these and other threats to the oceans caused by society. The programme's tone remains optimistic, though, by highlighting people who have dedicated their lives to protecting the seas

and what dwells within them.

One major threat to the oceans is plastic waste: around eight million tons of plastic a year end up in the sea, whether through shoddy disposal practices or cargo falling overboard, which happens more often than you might think; on average, four shipping containers a day fall into the drink. In 1992, a container ship 1,000 miles off Alaska lost a consignment of rubber ducks, and their journeys across the seas have usefully been tracked, with some reaching as far as Australia and Scotland. The durability which makes plastic so useful isn't a good thing when it's thrown away. A rubber duck – or a drinks bottle used for a few minutes one lunchtime – will take many centuries to biodegrade naturally. If it ends up floating around an ocean it will eventually break down into smaller pieces which get mistaken for food by marine life. Even plankton ingest tiny fragments of plastic, and when other creatures eat plankton and they in turn get eaten, plastic travels up the food chain. Deposits of plastic build up inside larger creatures, and these toxins contaminate their offspring. The programme includes sad footage of a Pilot Whale carrying its dead child, probably poisoned by pollution, and a collection



of debris regurgitated by a declining Albatross colony. Discarded fishing nets, six pack rings and carrier bags entangle birds, fish and whales. It's estimated that tens of millions of sharks are killed by nets every year.

Not mentioned in the programme are the 'garbage patches', where ocean currents have swept up plastic rubbish to form islands. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is estimated to be at least the size of Texas, and may even be over twenty times larger. Cleaning this up is just one of those problems which we're leaving for our grandchildren to deal with, along with radioactive waste and landfill sites. It's difficult to turn a profit out of dealing with detritus, so there's little incentive to address this now. And it seems that the garbage patches aren't threatening

the smooth running of capitalism enough for legislation to be put in place to deal with the problem. Less than 1 percent of international waters are protected by law, because laws to safeguard the oceans require agreement across states with their own commercial interests. Donald Trump's decision to withdraw America from the Paris Agreement about climate change was presumably made because he recognises that the treaty could limit profitable-but-polluting industries.

The effects of climate change are most apparent at the poles. In the Arctic, the amount of ice during its Summer months has reduced by 40 percent over the past 30 years. Oceanographer John Copley gathers data for international research into changing global temperatures and flies over Antarctica to see the massive splits in ice shelves caused by their melting. As ice thaws and breaks up, stored water is released, leading to a gradual rise in sea levels. It's estimated that by the end of the century the sea could have risen one or two metres, displacing millions of people.

As well as the rise in sea levels, climate change is also leading to an increase in sea temperatures. One result of this is to damage the algae which lives in coral,

leading to the coral being weakened until it dies, a process known as bleaching. In recent years, half the world's reefs have been affected. Underwater cameraman Dr Alex Vail, who regularly films around the Great Barrier Reef saw a bank of coral 'turn to rubble' over a period of just a few weeks. This also had a disastrous effect on the countless other creatures which lived on the reef.

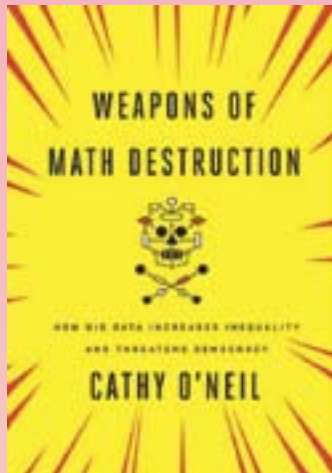
Climate change and garbage patches have both come about

because capitalism encourages us to produce and consume in ways which make money for the few rather than make sense for the environment. Fossil fuels remain more profitable to produce than renewable energy, and it's doubtful if the tide will turn quickly enough to reduce climate change. And it's in commodity manufacturers' interests for us to use more plastic, such as with the cycle of throwing out a Coke bottle so we can then buy another one. The consequences of our wasteful, short-sighted society are being played out in the world's oceans. How much sea ice and coral will be left by the time they start filming *Blue Planet III*?

**MIKE FOSTER**



## Pluses and Minuses



Cathy O’Neil: *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. Penguin. £9.99.

Computers may hold massive amounts of information about individuals, and can process this information to come to decisions which affect people’s lives. But it is often unclear what the basis is for the programs that do this processing, and their consequences can often be quite dire. The mathematical basis of the processing leads O’Neil to call them ‘weapons of math destruction’ (abbreviated, of course, as WMDs). Her book mainly relates to developments in the US, though that does not excuse a reference to ‘the British city of Kent’.

As an example, many job applications and their accompanying CVs are not examined by people at all, but only by WMDs, which among other things make use of personality tests which, for instance, ask applicants whether they are best described as ‘unique’ or ‘orderly’. If you have a bad credit score, that is likely to make you an unreliable worker, as reliable people pay their bills on time. If having a bad credit score stops you getting a job, then naturally that will not help your credit record, so the whole thing becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Moreover, what is used is often not a real credit score but what is termed an e-score, a kind of rough estimate that may use information such as where you live, rather than whether you pay bills on time.

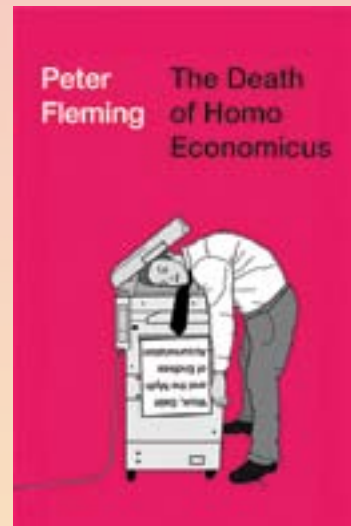
This illustrates a general problem with WMDs, that they analyse you by looking at ‘people like you’, rather than truly dealing with you as an individual. Also, rather than dealing with truly relevant data, they rely on proxies, substitute information that may or may not be accurate, such as a supposed correlation between a person’s postcode and their likelihood of paying back a loan. Add to this the fact that much information that

is held on computers is inaccurate: you may be in real trouble if someone with the same name as you, or even a similar name, has a police record.

In a slightly different area, Facebook determines what its members see on its social network, though the algorithms that lead to these decisions are opaque. This is particularly important when people get a lot of their news on Facebook. O’Neil says that Facebook is not a political WMD, as its network is not used to cause harm, but ‘the potential for abuse is vast’.

It is clear that WMDs, and much computer processing of data, emphasise efficiency and cost-saving over any concept of fairness or treating people equally. In this respect they are really just the latest extension of how capitalism works. O’Neil suggests that they could in principle be used to, for instance, identify and help problem families, but that is not what the profit system is interested in.

## Dead Economic Man



**The Death of Homo Economicus. Work, Debt and the Myth of Endless Accumulation.** By Peter Fleming. Pluto Press. 2017.

It’s a good title for a criticism of the view that economics can be explained as people behaving as if they were profit-seeking enterprises. Fleming says that this has now led to a ‘wreckage economy’ where the economists’ ‘dollar-hunting animals’ perform meaningless work and lead empty lives; homo economicus is dead and survives only as a zombie.

Today, Fleming argues, the preferred way for capitalist firms to make money is not to create new value but to devise ways of tapping in to pre-existing income streams, to pursue interest rather than profit. There is some truth in this ‘financialization’ of parts of the capitalist economy, but a rip-off economy cannot exist without something to rip off. There still has to be, and of course still is, a sector of the economy creating new value to feed the

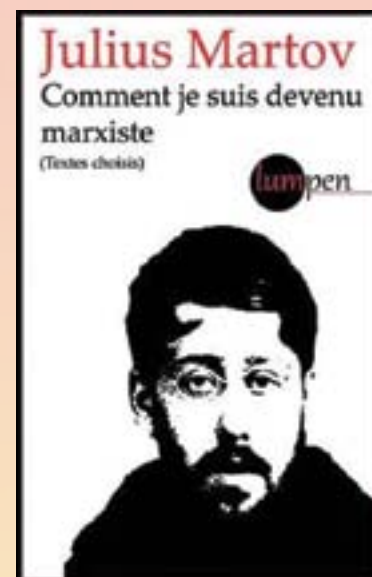
income streams.

A large part of the book is devoted to discussing work – office work as boring and meaningless and the various employer theories and practices to manage it; the growth of ‘self-employment’ which is really a way for employers to off-load the costs of directly employing workers (holiday pay, pensions, time at work not actually working); and resistance by individuals, sometimes violent, sometimes passive withdrawal, to the meaningless work capitalism imposes on them.

Some of the book is heavy going due to its postmodernist and French pop sociologists’ style but Fleming is basically on the right wave-length. The reduction of *all* (his emphasis) social life, not just economic, to the logic of profit-seeking, which latter-day capitalism has brought about, has led to all sorts of problems, social and psychological, and needs to be ended for the sake of people and the planet.

ALB

## Marxist



**Comment je suis devenu marxiste.** By Julius Martov. Editions Lumpen. ISBN 978-1-36-473548-7

This is virtually a French version of our new pamphlet on Martov, containing the same series of articles in which Martov demonstrates how Lenin and the Bolsheviks were distorting Marxism to justify the dictatorship over the working class that they were establishing. The title – ‘How I became a Marxist’ – is a bit misleading in that this is not the main article nor the whole of Martov’s draft autobiography. It does, however, have the merit of identifying the author as a Marxist. In the extract published here, Martov recounts how he became a Marxist, as someone who relied on the working class to overthrow Tsarism (as opposed to the Narodniks who relied on the peasants), while a student at St.

Petersburg University in 1892. Other short articles are included, a couple on the aftermath of the 1905 insurrection in Russia and Martov’s denunciation of the Bolshevik government for bringing back the death penalty. One minor criticism: the articles are not dated so it is left to the reader to work this out from their content.

ALB

## Music Review

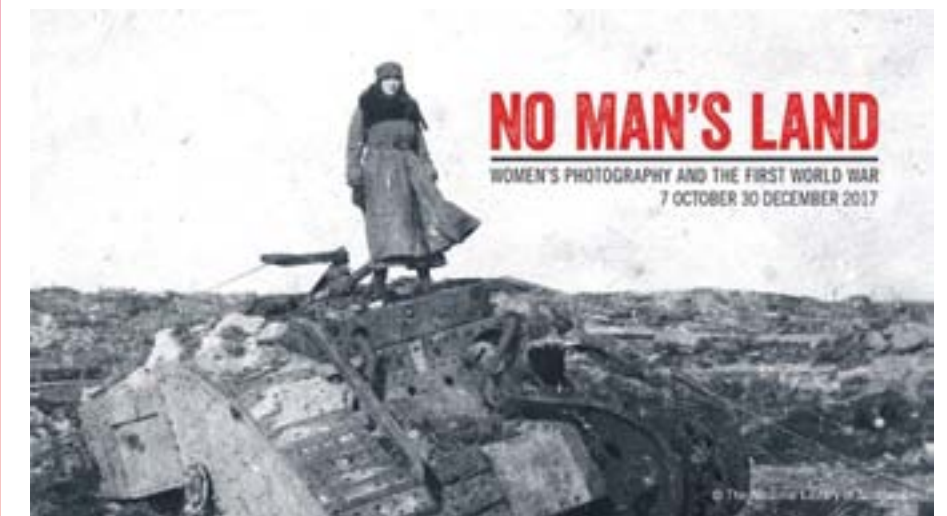


**Dangerous Dogs** by Stern John. Off Records. 2017.

A polemical and at times whimsical album of nine tracks from a latter-day Billy Bragg, with acoustic guitar at the ready. There also are echoes of the wry social commentary of bands who have stood outside the mainstream over the years like The Declan Swans and it is clear that Stern John has his proverbial ear to the ground when it comes to spotting social developments and pricking prevailing attitudes.

Stronger vocally than musically in the main, the first and last tracks – ‘The Tipping Point’ and ‘Rope’ seem to be the most overtly political and driven by a passion for things to change. ‘Rope’ is easily the stand-out track and deserves a wider audience, both for its lyrics and melody. It recognises the power of collective thought and action and forms a metaphoric call to arms for those who question the system – ‘tiny strands can make a rope, once bound together they can’t be broke, when we’re united there’s more hope . . . tiny strands can make a rope’.

DAP



The simple view of the First World War in gender terms is that men did the fighting while women, who were not allowed to fight, took many of their places on the ‘Home Front’. But an exhibition ‘No Man’s Land: Women’s Photography and the First World War’, seen at the Impressions Gallery in Bradford, shows that this is only part of the story. The Bradford exhibition closed at the end of December, but will be touring this year and next to Bristol, Leigh and Bishop Auckland.

All three depicted women who were employed in war zones, mainly as nurses, but also in other roles, such as ambulance drivers and welders. They variously showed men and women relaxing behind the lines, playing on swings, for instance. There are no photos of combat, but there are a number showing corpses and ruined buildings; as Chisholm noted, ‘One sees the most hideous sights imaginable, men with their jaws blown off, arms and legs mutilated’.

The work of three women photographers during and shortly after the war is featured. Florence Farmborough was working as a governess in Russia when the war broke out. She volunteered for the Red Cross and was assigned to a mobile military unit of the Russian army; her photos are among the few of the Eastern Front taken by a woman. Olive Edis was the first officially-commissioned British woman photographer sent to a war zone, in Northern France and Flanders, though this was only in 1919. Mairi Chisholm set up a first-aid post in Flanders and took many photos throughout the war using a small snapshot camera.

There are in addition photos by three contemporary women photographers. The most powerful of these are by Chloe Dewe Mathews, showing locations where WW1 Belgian, British and French soldiers were shot (or imprisoned prior to being shot) for cowardice or desertion; in many cases they were in reality suffering from shell shock. The photos are taken in the same season as the original events and at the same time of day. The scenes are bleak and extremely moving.

PB





# 50 Years Ago

## Not Another Labour Party

SOME TRADE unionists, fed up with Labour’s increasingly obvious anti-working class stand, have suggested that the unions should once again set up their own party. For, of course, this was how the Labour Party began. At the turn of the century union leaders, alarmed at the anti-union bias of the Courts, took up the suggestion of men like Keir Hardie for a party, independent of both the Liberals and the Tories, to represent Labour. It was not until 1918 that individuals could join the Labour Party. Before then the Party was little more than a trade union parliamentary pressure group (generally backing the Liberal government).

It has always been Labour’s claim to be the political arm of the Trade Union Movement. This claim is wearing a bit thin now. But many unionists still accept that the unions needs some political arm. If the Labour Party no longer represents them, why not set up another party?

In May 1966 Danny McGarvey, the boilermakers’ leader, said

that the unions might have to put up their own men against some official Labour candidates. Last November, Joe Gormley, the Lancashire miners’ leader, suggested that, in view of the Labour government’s policies, the miners and others might have to consider forming a new party — “a trade union party”. Of course Gormley, a member of the Labour Party’s National Executive Committee, did not really mean this. Only a few days later he was elected chairman of the NEC’s organisation sub-committee (which deals with discipline). All the same he did start off some discussion. A few miners’ lodges did break with Labour. Pottery Workers’ Union secretary Alfred Dulson, whose union has already stopped financing Labour, said:

“I am sure this is the way trade unionists have got to go. The Labour Party no longer represents the interests of trade unions” (*Financial Times*, 13 November 1967).

(from *Socialist Standard*, January 1968)

## Feed the World: Overthrow Capitalism

As usual, over the Christmas period, we were bombarded with images of starving children and urged to donate money to stop a few of them dying. These are appeals to try to empty the ocean with a teaspoon, as the following – adapted from an article that appeared in Wildcat some thirty years ago – explains.

The problems of hunger and starvation are inescapable consequences of the present world system of food production but it is well within the potential power of the world’s working class to destroy this system, and replace it with a totally different one, in which such problems could soon be eradicated.

### PRODUCTION FOR PROFIT

Under the existing world system – capitalism – food isn’t directly produced to be eaten. Like everything else, the production of food is geared towards the realisation of profit through the sale of goods on the market. Considerations of price, profit and the market, rather than the satisfaction of basic human needs, are the factors which determine what is produced.

When we hear of record ‘surpluses’ of foodstuffs, therefore, it obviously doesn’t mean that everyone is so full-up they can’t eat another mouthful. It simply means that, *in market terms*, the supply of food exceeds economic demand for it to the extent that the sellers are in danger of

being unable to get a profitable price for their goods.

Production for profit via the market also means that if there is no prospect of a profit to be made by producing something, then it simply won’t be



produced - if goods have already been produced in the expectation of making a profit, and this expectation becomes unfounded for some reason, then these

goods will not be sold, and might even be destroyed.

These absurdities are inevitable consequences of the market system itself.

### PRODUCTION FOR USE

Since mountains of ‘surplus’ food and millions of starving people exist side-by-side because under capitalism there is no *direct* link between the production of food and the satisfaction of basic human needs, it follows that the only way to solve the problem of world hunger is to do away with money, prices, profits and all other trappings of the market system, and replace it with a society in which everything, including food, is produced directly for use.

This will entail wrenching all means of wealth-production out of the hands of the minority which owns and controls them at present, and establishing world communism based on the common ownership and democratic control of the world’s resources. If everyone had an equal say in how the world’s resources should be used, it would be hard to imagine a majority of the world’s population voting to continue to devote resources to the production of harmful or unnecessary crops such as tobacco, for example. The basic requirements of the most needy would be the first and most urgent priority.

## Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

### JANUARY 2018

#### LONDON

**West London**  
**Tuesday 9 January, 8.00 p.m.**  
**West London Branch (business meeting)**  
**Venue: Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN**  
**Saturday 27 January, 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. Diseases of the Poor**  
**Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, Hammersmith, London W6 9JY (beside Town Hall, nearest tube: Ravenscourt Park)**

**Clapham**  
**Sunday 21 January, 6.00 p.m.**  
**Film Evening**  
**Good Bye Lenin!**  
**Socialist Party’s Premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**

### Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.*

**Object**  
**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

**Declaration of Principles**  
The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

**DONCASTER**  
**Sunday 14 January, 1.30 p.m.**  
**Yorkshire Regional Branch**  
**Venue: TBA**  
**Contact [richardrainferd@gmail.com](mailto:richardrainferd@gmail.com) for further details**

### FEBRUARY 2018

#### LONDON

**West London**  
**Tuesday 6 February, 8.00 p.m.**  
**West London Branch (business meeting)**  
**Venue: Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall. Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN**  
**Tuesday 20 February, 8.00 p.m.**  
**Public meeting: subject to be announced**  
**Venue: Committee Room, ChiswickTown Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN**

**Clapham**  
**Sunday 18 February, 6.00 p.m.**  
**Film Evening**  
**The Ballad of Joe Hill**

**Socialist Party’s Premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**

**DONCASTER**  
**Saturday 24 February, 1.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.**  
**The Environment: Is Capitalism Killing the World?**  
**Venue: Doncaster Brewery, Young Street, Doncaster DN1 3EL**

**EC Meeting**  
**Saturday 6 January 2018, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.**  
**Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.**

### Picture Credits

Cover:



## Much Ado About Nothing

The capitalist class, as a result of their control of the means of mental production, focus the attention of the working class on things that are often of little concern or consequence e.g. reality television, royalty or republicanism. In an article titled *Meghan Markle Can't Save the World* we read: 'A just world will not only be one where outmoded institutions like the monarchy no longer exist, no matter how glamorous, charming, and well-meaning today's royals are. It's also one where we won't need any more celebrity humanitarians' (jacobin.mag, 1 December). Yet a world without royal parasites would not necessarily be a just world. Napoleon III ceased to rule France in 1870 and the USA did away with the monarchy a century earlier (although Trump is doing a good impersonation of George III), but neither can be considered just. That will have to wait until we focus on securing a world without war and want, one without states and their leaders royal or otherwise.

## As They Like It

Freedom fighters, past and present, so often championed by the Left for seeking justice, whether successful or not, play Game of Thrones often at the cost of working class lives. What has the replacement of one set of rulers by another achieved? Enter stage Left King and Queen Ortega, the recently deposed King Mugabe, and soon to be crowned Evo Morales. 'Bolivia, along with Nicaragua, is now the only presidential democracy in the Americas to place no limits on re-election. Last month, a senior minister shared an image of a placard which invited Morales to stay in power until 2050' (theguardian.com, 3 December). Elsewhere (unz.com, 30 November) we are reminded that 'all three South-African Presidents supported Robert Mugabe.' Socialists

would instead point to the election of the Mandela to power. This event was supposed to see the grinding poverty of the townships ended, but he, Mbeki and Zuma have turned out to be powerless to run capitalism in a way that would end exploitation and poverty. Mbeki is responsible for the premature deaths of up to 365,000 AIDS victims. King Zuma has his palace.

## 'You take my life if you do take the means whereby I live'

Socialists are in agreement with Shakespeare here. This is precisely the position for the great majority of us today. The means whereby we live — society's natural and industrial resources — are monopolized by a minority who thus form a privileged class. This is the basis of present-day society the world over, Workers die slowly or prematurely in the service of King Capital. Everything is for

organ trade, a private legal practitioner reveals. Organ trade is the trade of human organs, tissues or other body parts for the purpose of transplantation. According to Bobby Banson, he has seen videos, where at least one person caught up in the slavery alleged that body parts of his colleagues were harvested and sold abroad. "One of the persons I heard, said the truth is that they are not sold to go and work, but their human parts are harvested... kidney, liver are in high demand in these areas" (ghanaweb.com, 2 December).

## First we kill all the lawyers

Tempting, but no: the law is an instrument of the owning class, that pretends to be for everyone, but is only for the rich. Prince Laurent, brother to the King of Belgium, 'says proposed pay cut would breach his human rights' (theguardian.com, 1 December)! Apparently, the prime minister is threatening to cut his annual £280,000 government endowment. 'Laurent's lawyer insists that "in humiliating ways" the prince has been stopped all his life from getting a job, in a manner damaging to his "image and, dare I add, his health". "In this traditional view, a prince was not allowed to work (it would testify to "a desire for money", a reproach that some people dare to repeat today, which is the world upside down!)," the lawyer writes.' Anatole France knew better, writing of 'the majestic egalitarianism of the law, which forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.' The law isn't an ass. It's an instrument of class domination, a very powerful one which will continue until a majority of us come to understand and desire socialism. Then the world will be truly turned upside down.



sale. 'The widely condemned slavery in Libya goes beyond the sale of human beings as some 'slave masters' engage in

